



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Public Library

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Library to Host Exhibit Focusing on Abraham Lincoln and Emancipation *San Diego Public Library One of 40 Libraries Presenting the Traveling Exhibit*

SAN DIEGO – Why did a nation founded on ideals of freedom and equality tolerate for so long one of the harshest labor systems the world has known? A new traveling exhibition at the City of San Diego Public Library looks for answers to this question by tracing Abraham Lincoln's gradual transformation from an antislavery moderate into "The Great Emancipator," who freed all slaves with a revolutionary war-time proclamation in 1863.

"Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation" will be on display Oct. 11 through Nov. 24 at the Central Library, located at 820 E St. in downtown San Diego. The Central Library is one of 40 stops on the national traveling exhibit's schedule, which began in September 2003. In conjunction with the exhibit, the Library will present a variety of great special events. All showings of the exhibition as well as the special events will be free and open to the public.

"The San Diego Public Library is pleased to have been selected as a site for this exhibition," said City Library Director Anna Tatár. "The Civil War and slavery are topics which must constantly be revisited in order to help 21st century Americans better understand their causes and more clearly see how their effects are still with us today."

The exhibit includes reproductions of rare historical documents, period photographs, and illustrative material, such as engravings, lithographs, cartoons and political ephemera. The exhibit focuses on young Lincoln's America, the House dividing, war for the Union, the Emancipation Proclamation, the role of black soldiers in the Civil War, and the final months of the Civil War and Lincoln's life.

Special events will include film screenings, lectures, storytelling and book discussions, as well as programs for children and teens.

Organized by the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York City, in cooperation with the American Library Association, this traveling exhibition is made possible through major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, created by Congress and charged with planning the national celebration of Lincoln's 200th birthday.

"This exhibit offers our community an opportunity to learn more about how Abraham Lincoln

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decided upon emancipation of the slaves, even as he tried to hold together a fragile coalition of states in order to preserve the Union,” said Tatar. It is a revealing insight into the values, principles, and ideals that guided one of our greatest presidents.”

Abraham Lincoln was an obscure Illinois lawyer and politician of humble origins who rose in an astonishingly short time to world renown as the leader of a young nation during one of its most troubled times. Throughout his life, Lincoln’s dedication to the ideals of freedom and equality for all people did not waver. “I want every man to have the chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he can better his condition,” he said early in his career.

Lincoln was also a pragmatic politician who believed that a direct attack on slavery in the South would split the Union and end America’s experiment in self-government. He steered a middle course during the early years of the Civil War but became convinced that ending slavery would help the Union. Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation transformed the character of the war by re-committing the nation to its founders’ vision of freedom and equality for all.

“Forever Free” draws upon original documents in the collections of the Huntington Library and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. It was curated by John Rhodehamel, Norris Foundation Curator of American historical manuscripts at the Huntington Library.

For more information about the “Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln’s Journey to Emancipation” exhibit and special events, contact the Central Library at 619-236-5821 or visit www.sandiegolibrary.org.

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